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ABSTRACT

A two-year study investigated writing in the elementary school. Data collected included field notes from observation of a second/third grade classroom, videotapes of selected classroom activities, weekly journals kept by the teacher reflecting her thoughts on teaching in general and on writing in particular, interviews with the teacher about the contents of videotapes and journal entries, student writings collected naturalistically, and conversations with students about their writing. Results revealed that the teaching and learning of writing was largely inarticulated. When free of the materials and precise district mandates both supporting and limiting instruction in other academic areas, writing posed both a problem and an opportunity for the teacher and students. Much of the creative instruction in writing was "invisible." Teachers often engaged students in writing that was incidental (to the completion of other academic tasks), or writing became such a part of everyday life in the classroom that it went unremarked upon by those involved. (HOD)

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What Can You Learn About Writing in School?: A Case Study in an Elementary Classroom[1,2]

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Introduction

There is a great deal that we do not know about literacy. In anthropology, debates are waged about the effects of the advent of writing on the intellectual traditions and history of a society (Goody & Watt, 1977; Goody, 1977). In psychology, much inquiry concerns the intellectual consequences of literacy in the life of the individual (Scribner & Cole, 1981). Social critics and educators struggle with questions of the appropriate environments, techniques, and goals for literacy instruction. For some, literay is operationally defined as an array of technical skills requisite for performance in many occupations. For others, literacy is the key to other worlds--both within and outside oneself (Bettelheim, 1967). For still others, literacy is a crucial form of "cultural capital" (Bourdieu, 1977) without which critique of the conditions of one's life is difficult and the means to change those conditions out of reach (Friere, 1970; Giroux, 1979).

However we think of the effects of literacy on the individual and the community, there appears to be consensus that writing is a cultural tool (Vygotsky, 1978) making possible a variety of expressive activities. In our society, schools are vested with great responsibility for teaching people to wield that cultural tool. There is much contemporary concern about the effectiveness with which schools impart literacy skills to students. Beyond these observations, however, consensus and good information end. Apart from the manifest curricula for reading and language arts, little is known about writing in either the school or non-school lives of children (Hymes, 1979), and the

classroom is not well-documented as an environment for literacy. The research on which this paper reports was undertaken to learn more about writing in the school life of children.

Background of the Research Problem

Scholars of language and culture have expressed concern about the adequacy of the classroom as an environment for learning to write. Cook-Gumperz & Gumperz (1978), for example, argue that schools in our society too narrowly define both the uses of written literacy and the skills necessary to accomplish them. Shuy (1981) echoes this concern. He points out that while children have mastered a broad range of oral language functions by the time that they enter school, most have had limited experience in writing.

School, it is argued, is a public and institutional place. As such it is typified by a formal language register (Cazden, 1979) and by expressive activities in the European essayist tradition (Scollon & Scollon, 1981). School writing has been criticized as being largely teacher-generated, monologic, and non-functional in the out-of-school lives of children (Shuy, 1981; Florio, 1979). Such a learning environment limits children's opportunities to acquire and practice a broad and rich sociolinguistic repertoire (Hymes, 1974). For writing in particular, which is generally acquired at school rather than in the home, the consequences of this narrowness are several. First, children may never practice parts of the written expressive universe that are self-generated, transactional and useful in the course of life outside school. Second, particularly for children whose own culture does not define writing so narrowly,

children may experience failure as they attempt to make sense of literacy activities at school in their own terms (Scollon & Scollon, 1981; Au & Mason, 1981). Third, students may fail to acquire values about literacy and its manifold personal and social possibilities (Friere, 1970). If such is the case, children's competence in writing may never be fully realized, not <u>despite</u> their formal education, but as a consequence of its limitations.

These are disturbing and powerful hypotheses about the classroom as a learning environment for writing. Our way to pursue them is to enter the classroom and examine it as a social context for writing and its instruction.

The Study

The two-year study on which this paper reports was conceived in curiosity about the classroom as an environment for literacy. Thus it began, not with an exclusive focus on the reading or language arts curriculum and instruction extant there, but by observing broadly the everyday life of the classroom. By means of extensive participant observation and broad interchange with teacher and students, the researchers hoped to discover and describe the way that classroom participants make sense of their literate world.

Two assumptions guiding the study were that writing is an expressive option that is, like speech, acquired in use, and that, in our society, the classroom is a key site in which the young are exposed to literacy. For these reasons it was decided to examine

not only the social context for written literacy that the classroom provides, but the perspectives of teachers and children on what writing is for and what it means to be literate. Thus the theoretical underpinnings and design of the research were interdisciplinary. In an effort to document the classroom as an environment for written literacy, perspectives and methods of ethnography, sociolinguistics, and cognitive psychology were combined and augmented with insights of the experienced teachers who participated in the research.

In the face of our relative ignorance about the classroom as an environment for written literacy, it was decided to adopt a phenomenological stance in the research. In phenomenology, our aim is to encounter the object of our curiosity in a state of wonder (Schutz, 1976). We endeavor to put aside our presuppositions about what the reality of the situation might be and to discover its reality anew by immersion within it. In so doing, our aim is not to explain, but to describe (Wittgenstein, 1953/68).

In developing the descriptive model of the classroom under study, analytic categories were arrived at inductively. The researchers and informants sifted the naturalistic data for patterns of meaningful acitivity in writing. In addition, however, insights from previous research on writing and teaching and the experiences of participating teachers provided useful conceptual levers to interpret the data (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). Of focal importance was the grounding of inferences about written literacy in the everyday activities of teacher and students. Such inferences were tested by repeated observations. Competing explanations were sought and evidence from multiple data points was compared (Gorden, 1975). The

interdisciplinary and collaborative nature of the study enabled these activities. Eventually a descriptive model of writing in the classroom was derived. The model portrays the functions of writing in the classroom, the forms attendant to those functions, and the values implicit in those functions about writing and its purposes.

The classroom in question in this report is called Room 12. It was studied both as a small community in its own right and as a social group within the wider communities of school and neighborhood (Florio, 1979). The teacher, Ms. Donovan*, was a key informant in the study since it was she who planned most classroom activites and prepared the learning environment for students (Clark & Yinger, 1980). Data collected in the study reflected the interdisciplinary nature of the research and were intended to yield a broad and rich documentation of writing in Room 12. Data collected included the following:

--field notes of year-long participant observation,

--videotapes of selected classroom activities,

--weekly journals kept by the teacher reflecting her thoughts on teaching in general and on writing in particular,

--interviews with the teacher about the contents of videotapes and journal entries,

--student writings collected naturalistically, and

--conversations with students about their writing.

This paper offers only a partial report of the findings of the study. It presents the descriptive model of the functions of writing

*Pseudonyms are used throughout this report.

in Room 12 that was derived by analysis of the many types of descriptive data collected. Prelude to the presentation of the model is a brief description of the school and community in which Room 12 is located. Following the discussion of the functions of writing in Room 12 are some thoughts on the nature of the writing curriculum and on this classroom as an environment for literacy.

This report focuses on a second/third grade located in Room 12 of the Conley Elementary School. The school is in the East Eden School District--a district serving approximately 4,600 students. The small city of East Eden is the home of a large land grant university and abuts the capitol of a mid-western state. Its population is a diverse one with families of many ethnic and racial backgrounds and a variety of occupations ranging from state government employment and university teaching to farming and automotive work. The East Eden School District has been revising its K-12 curriculum for writing over the past few years. Thus, teachers have been reminded of the priority currently being placed on writing and its instruction.

Room 12 is the only room of its kind in the Conley School. Its special nature has implications for the uses of writing that were observed there. In order to locate writing meaningfully within the social context of the classroom, it is important briefly to consider Room 12 and Conley School as learning environments.

Occupying an entire wing of the Conley School building, Room 12 houses four teachers and four cross-age homerooms--two at the second/third grade level and two at the fourth/fifth. The room has

movable walls and a large common area. The four homerooms are in alcoves of the room and can be isolated from one another or merged (see Figure 1). Mixed age interaction, independent and small group learning in centers, and a flexible team approach to planning and teaching are important aspects of life in Room 12.

Conley School is not an unlikely place for such an alternative learning environment. It is known in the community of East Eden as a lively and active place particularly effective in instructing children from diverse backgrounds. Conley School receives Title I aid and, although many children attending the school come from middle class households, many of its students are poor. While the parents of some children are employed by the nearby state university, others work in local agriculture or the auto industry. Unemployment in the Conley neighborhood is increasing, and many families live in government subsidized housing. As in the rest of East Eden, a large number of Conley children from all economic backgrounds live in single-parent households.

Established as an alternative learning environment in 1976, Room 12 has not been uncontroversial. Some teachers consider it a professional challenge to work there, while other shun the room's apparent disorder and lack of privacy. Some parents prefer less open environments for the children, while others consider assignment of their children to the room as a special opportunity. Children from all backgrounds are represented among Room 12's membership.

Room 12 has changed over the years in the direction of less open space, mixed age activity. The fourth/fifth grade homerooms

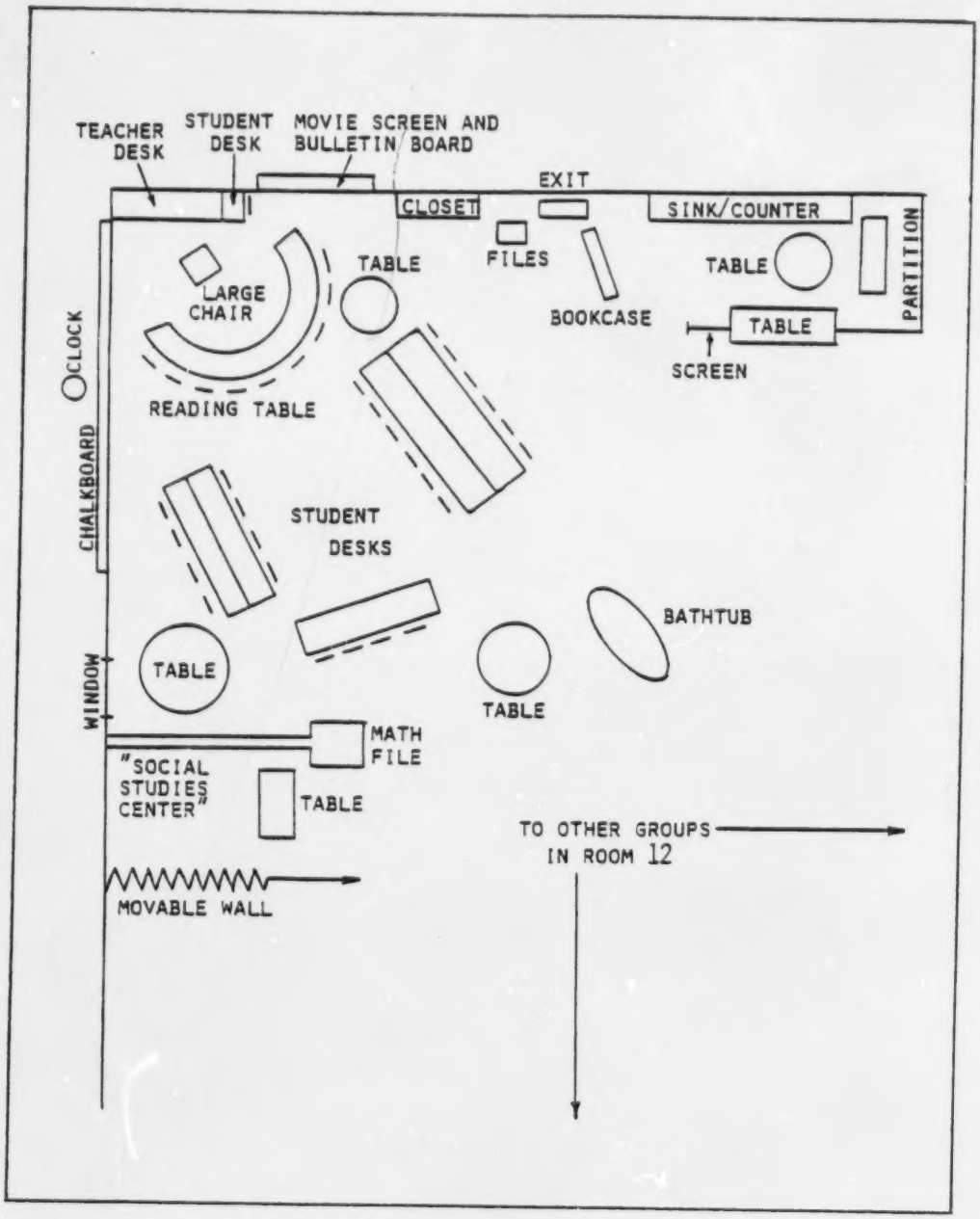


Figure 1. Map of Ms. Donovan's corner of room twelve (Field Notes, 9/5/79).

tend to remain in the west side of the room for most of the day while the second/third grade homerooms tend to occupy the east. However, many of the vestiges of the open education movement that originally inspired Room 12 remain. Students have many opportunities to choose the timing and format of their academic and social activities. They work in a variety of instructional arrangements including teacher-led large groups, small student groups, mixed age tutorials, and independent learning centers.

Room 12's openness, the nearly one hundred mixed-age students who occupy it, its special status in the building and community, and its ethos of student choice in learning give rise to the following four broad functions of writing in Ms. Donovan's class that were identified in the course of the research:

1. writing to participate in community,
2. writing to know oneself and others,
3. writing to occupy free time, and
4. writing to demonstrate academic competence.

The Functions of Writing in Room 12

This study was instituted with an interest in the social situations in which students' written products arise and in which their beliefs and values about writing are shaped. Toward these ends, guiding questions raised in the process of collecting and analyzing data included the following: What opportunities for writing do students find in the classroom? How is writing used by students to meet those opportunities? How do teachers and students differentiate among the functions of writing and the forms appropriate to them? What contextual forces are operant in this process?

To address questions of this nature, one needs to approach writing holistically--not as a series of discrete skills to be mastered, but as a cultural tool in use. Viewed in this light, writing functions are the focus of inquiry. This focus on function stands in sharp contrast to other ways of studying language that have typically emphasized the study of language forms. To study writing in this way, one takes an ethnographic stance that, in Basso's (1977) words,

> focuses upon writing as a form of communicative activity and takes as a major objective the analysis of the structure and function of this activity (p. 420).

Table 1 summarizes the four broad purposes to which writing was put by Ms. Donovan and her students in their corner of Room 12. Life in that alcove was varied. There were scheduled and impromptu lessons, group and individual activities, teacher-planned and student choice times. Written communication in Ms. Donovan's class reflects this social and academic diversity. Each of the four functions of written literacy documented in this class arises out of particular intellectual and social needs and opportunities presented by the school and classroom.

Table 1 presents as a formal matrix what was, in reality, a series of dynamic, interactive occasions for writing. The matrix was derived from analysis of the various descriptive data collected in Room 12 during the 1979-80 academic year. It was developed with Ms. Donovan's collaboration as the year progressed and was tested and elaborated with data from subsequent observations during the year.

Table 1

The Functions of Writing in Room Twelve

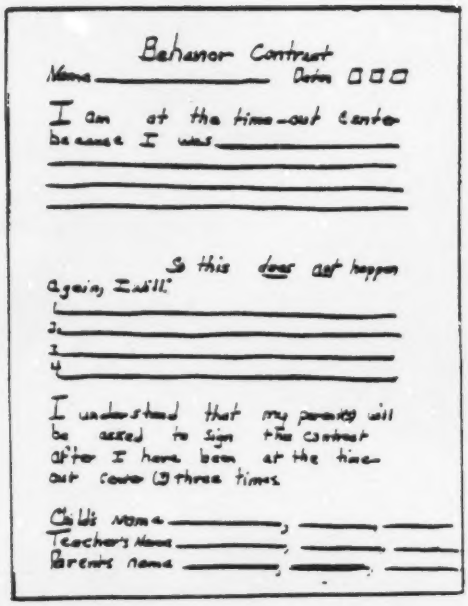
FUNCTION TYPE	SAMPLE ACTIVITY	DISTINCTIVE FEATURES						
		INITIATOR	COMPOSER	WRITER/ SPEAKER	AUDIENCE	FORMAT	FATE	EVALUATION
TYPE I: WRITING TO PARTICIPATE IN COMMUNITY	classroom rule-setting	teacher	teacher & students	teacher	student	by teacher and students: drafted on chalkboard; printed in colored marker on large white paper	posted; referred to when rules are broken	no
TYPE II: WRITING TO KNOW ONESELF AND OTHERS	diaries	teacher	student	student	student	by teacher: written or printed on lined paper in student-made booklets	locked in teacher's file cabinet or kept in student desk; occasionally shared with teacher, other students, or family	no
TYPE III: WRITING TO OCCUPY FREE TIME	letters and cards	student	student	student	other (parents, friends, family)	by student: printed or drawn on lined or construction paper	kept; may be given as gift to parents or friend	no
TYPE IV: WRITING TO DEMONSTRATE ACADEMIC COMPETENCE	science lab booklets	teacher	publisher	publisher & student(s)	teacher	by publisher: printed in commercial booklet	checked by teacher; filed for later use by student; pages sent home to parents by teacher	yes

Implicit in the matrix is the notion that classroom literacy resides not entirely in the production and comprehension of documents, but in a complex of social and cognitive features including roles, expressive intentions, resources for communication, and outcomes of communication. The four general functions of writing identified can thus be distinguished from one another not only by the documents produced (see Figure 2), but in terms of the ways in which they variously combine and manifest these social and cognitive distinctive features.

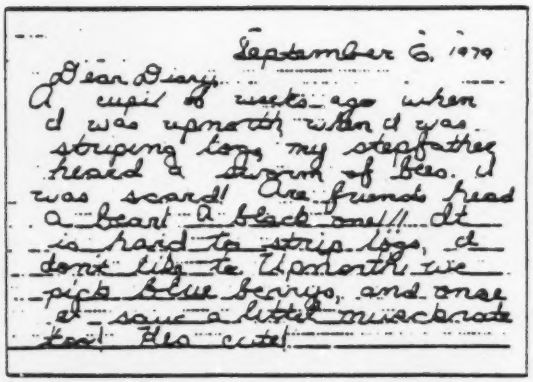
Writing in Room 12 is used to serve multiple purposes including but not limited to the demonstration of academic mastery. In addition, writing occurs throughout the curriculum--in reading and language arts, but also in science, social studies and the like. Beyond its appearance in the manifest curricular areas, moveover, writing occurs and serves important purposes in the establishment, enactment, and regulation of the classroom social life.

The Four Functions in Comparison and Contrast

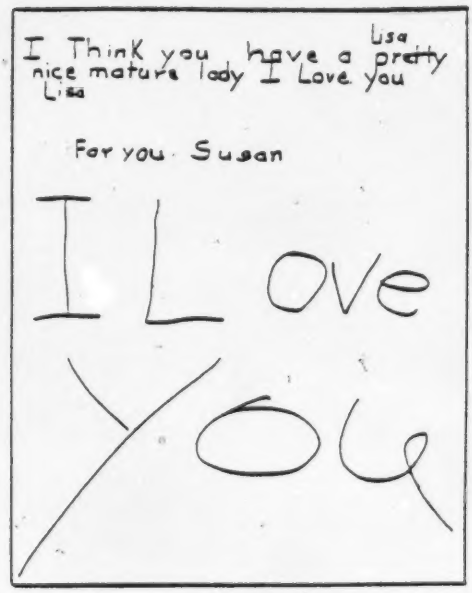
Varying somewhat systematically with the sociocognitive purposes to which writing is put in Room 12 are the distinctive features presented in the matrix. These features reflect the truly local norms of life in Room 12 (Hymes, 1976) but also reflect a commonsense understanding of the social roles, intentions and outcomes that abide in much writing undertaken in our culture. The features that vary meaningfully from function to function in Room 12 have been identified to include the initiator of the occasion for writing, the composer of the written product, the person(s) who actually write(s) the


Behavior Contract
Name
Date
I am at the time-out center because I was
So this does not happen again, I will:
1.
2.
3.
4.
I understand that my parents will be asked to sign the contract after I have been at the time-out center three times.
Child's Name
Teacher's Name
Parents name

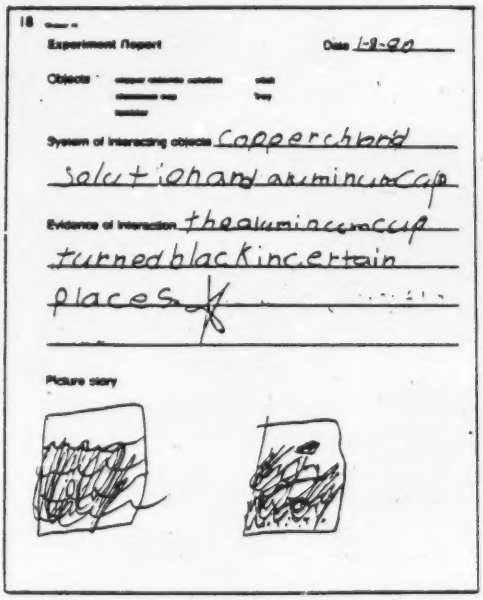
Behavior Contract (Type I)


September 6, 1979
Dear Diary,
A cupil of weeks ago when I was upnorth with I was
striping logs my stepfather
heard a swarm of bees. I
was scard! Are friends head
a beart a black one!! It
is hard to strip logs, I
dont like to Upnorth we
pick blue berrys, and ones
I save a little muckmuck
for! Bee cute!

Diary Page (Type II)



Student Letter (Type III)



Lab Booklet Page (Type IV)

Figure 2. Documents reflecting the four functions of writing in room twelve.

document, the writing's intended audience, the format of the document (and the person(s) who plan that format), the ultimate fate of the written document, and the presence or absence of formal evaluation of the writing.[1]

The distinctive features of the four functions of writing are imtimately bound up in the social contexts within which the writing is undertaken and the documents ultimately produced. To perform these functions of written literacy entails not only competence to manipulate written symbols, but the negotiation and enactment of a variety of social roles within the context of school and classroom.

The important facets of writing in this classroom include some that appear regularly in the literature as generic parts of the composing process (e.g., composer, audience, format). Others, however, reflect the unique institutional context of the school and classroom. One would expect, for example, that audience would be a relevant feature of most or all writing. However, one would not expect that all writing would necessarily have as a distinctive feature the presence or absence of formal evaluation. Some writing's effectiveness is based, instead, on its ability to persuade or elicit a response from its audience. Similarly, in the case of the solitary writer in a private setting, it might not be relevant to distinguish the initiator from the writer in an occasion for writing. A diarist initiates her/his own writing as does a housekeeper preparing a

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[1] While the four functions are described in detail elsewhere (Florio & Clark, in press), this report focuses on their comparison and contrast and the social meanings that reside in them.

shopping list or a researcher hoping to share findings from her/his study. This is not always the case in the classroom, however.

Finally, some of the distinctive features reflect the explicitly local context of the elementary classroom. For example, in most adult literacy events it is unlikely that we would count a speaker as a writer. One would assume that at the very least one would have to inscribe graphically to be considered engaged in writing. In the elementary classroom, however, as researchers such as Cook-Gumperz and Gumperz (1978) have shown us, a child may gradually approach writing through the oral medium of discussion or sharing with others. Thus an event like Show and Tell may take on a distinctively literacy-related quality in a setting such as the elementary classroom.[2]

One peculiarity in the matrix reflecting the local norms of the elementary classroom social context is the breaking down of the graphic activity into three roles--initiator, composer, and scribe. In Room 12, as in other classrooms, the teacher was the frequent initiator of writing activities. In fact, the matrix shows that in only one type of writing is the student the initiator--writing to occupy free time. In an open space classroom with a great deal of such free time to be structured by the student, there was, in fact, a great deal of such initiation. But one could imagine classrooms

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[2]Although not brought out in this matrix, the same could also apply to the rather fuzzy distinction that might be drawn between early drawing and early writing. Much as it is difficult to pinpoint precisely the beginnings of literacy in societies, in part because pictorial representation preceded and is so closely related to it (Goody & Watt, 1977), so it is with early writing and with the mingling of drawing and writing that often marks the writtey literacy of young children (Gardner, 1980; Clay, 1975; Ervin-Tripp & Mitchell-Kernan, 1977).

organized differently in which the teacher would be the sole initiator of all written activity in the classroom.

In general, in Room 12, the roles of initiator, composer, and scribe are not held by the same person. The students often have the opportunity collectively to compose a document while the teacher writes it down at the chalkboard or on large white butcher paper. In such cases, the students undertake the composing activities typically related to writing, including brainstorming for ideas, finding words to express one's intentions, placing punctuation, and proofreading and correcting. However, for the ease of group generation of a text (or because early in the year children lack sufficient mechanical skills to write privately), these interactive compositions are encoded by the teacher.[3]

Another distinction that applies uniquely to institutional settings is that of separation of the formatting role from the roles of composer or encoder in the literacy event. We have all had the experience of filling out forms--whether they be for income tax, unemployment, or mail orders. In so doing we are painfully aware of our subordinate status in the writing process. In order to communicate effectively we must capitulate to the thematic categories, technical language, and space limitations of the form. Although it can be argued that to communicate effectively under any

[3]It has been argued elsewhere that such interactive cognitive events may help to expand and extend the individual beyond the limits of what her/his production would be alone (Vygotsky, 1978; Cole, et al., 1979). In addition, however, they are uniquely suited to public literacy events such as the generation of a code of classroom rules, the productionof a class thank you note to someone who has served the group, or the teaching of a whole group session.

circumstances we must submit to constraints including the orthography of the language, conventions of genre, and the like, the form is an extreme case of the separation of the formatting role from the encoding role. It can be argued in such cases that the formatter and the person filling in the form at best collaborate in composing the document.

Viewed in this way, children in Room 12 are at least in part collaborators with publishers as fillers-out of forms. This is a role they identified for the researchers when asked to sort and describe their bi-weekly folder of writings. They uniformly separated forms such as worksheets and workbook pages into a separate category, calling it "work" and pointing out that it was special because it was "written by machine." Because of the nature of the open classroom organization and curriculum of Room 12, it is notable that such form-filling was only one of four types of written enterprises observed. However, it is worthy of note as well that such form filling was always evaluated formally and shared with parents. While other student written work may or may not have received formal or informal evaluation, the writing that students did in collaboration with publishers was always evaluated formally--hence, perhaps, the common categorization of it as "work" by the students and its similar labeling in the ordinary educational parlance.

This matrix reveals a great deal of what can be thought of as the "hidden curriculum" (Jackson, 1968) for written literacy in Room 12. Writing continues to be unique among the basics in East Eden in that it lacks many explicit props or guidelines for curri-

culum and instruction. Other than a district-wide (and teacher generated) set of loose guidelines called the "Common Writings,"[4] teachers are not required to specify their writing curriculum, nor are they innundated with prepackaged materials for writing instruction as they are in such areas as math, reading, science, and social studies.

Although four types of writing are used in the classroom, they are not all claimed as part of the writing curriculum by the teacher. While our descriptive analysis documents that, contrary to critics, writing clearly does occur in the classroom and that a great range of kinds of writing are undertaken there, much of the writing documented in the matrix has a somewhat incidental quality.[5] The hiddenness of many of the varied ways in which children are using writing as a cultural tool in Room 12 obscures some potentially rich opportunities to make explicit literacy-related aspects of an activity.

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[4]The "Common Writings" are the only district mandates in East Eden that pertain to writing. They are a series of performance objectives for grades K-12 presented as "writing forms" that students at various grades must be able to produce. The forms (usually five or six per grade) must be evidenced by one example that is placed in the student's cumulative record. These writing samples accompany the child through the grades as evidence of competence in writing. The teacher has considerable latitude in deciding when and how to elicit the samples (see appendix).

[5]Even when this incidental writing is noticed by the teacher, the problem of how to evaluate such work without discouraging student initiative and risk-taking is one with which Ms. Donovan struggled. The way it was resolved, at least in part, was to assess formally only a small sample of student writing. Informal assessment, or the effect of written expression on the student's intended audience, was inevitable and available as well. The teacher used it to work with children on their stories and diaries, and all recipients of student written gifts and letters offered similar responses. But it is difficult for such assessment to enter into what Doyle (1978) called the "grade economy" of the classroom--to be capital in the classroom environment.

It also obscures aspects of student competence from teacher purview and evaluation. Finally, the student has many opportunities to write, but they vary greately as to the degree that they offer access to the whole expressive process--from initiation of an idea through the formatting, the composing, and encoding of it.

Such differences in the complex of sociocognitive features of various occasions for writing may not only teach children different intellectual skills related to literacy (Scribner & Cole, 1981), but they may also impart different values about literacy and its use. We begin to see the association, for example, of form-filling with work and performance evaluation. We see that some writing is collaborative and public and related to the management of social relations. We can learn that the written word is a safe haven into which to retreat when in a busy and crowded open space we want some time to relax and be alone. But we may also learn that such writing doesn't "count" for much. We see that writing is a bridge to others--through letters and gifts--and to one's inner world--through diaries. These values and meanings about literacy and what is available to one as a literate member of a community are remarkable to learn--but they go ununremarked upon as part of the communicative ecology of the classroom. Some would argue that they deserve at least as much explicit attention as do the mechanical skills of production (Elsasser and John-Steiner, 1977.

Conclusion

One way to characterize curriculum is, in Eggleston's (1977) words, as "a body of learning experiences responding to a societal

view of knowledge that may not always be fully expressed or even fully accepted by teachers and students" (p. 20). It was not until this study was well underway that the researchers realized that to study the processes of teaching and learning writing in the classroom was, in fact, to study the writing curriculum. Thus, it was a long time before the teachers and researchers in dialogue with one another discovered the curricula for writing embedded in everyday activities in the classroom.

Perhaps because writing instruction in Room 12, unlike instruction in other school subjects, lacks a "received" and highly standardized system of objectives and materials, it is easy to assume that it lacks a curriculum. But as Eggleston's characterization indicates, curriculum may exist without full consensus about or full expression of the structure and contents of knowledge, the appropriate ways to impart knowledge, the persons to whom it should be taught, the means to evaluate such efforts, or the values underlying its instruction.

In large part we have found that this state of affairs characterized the writing curriculum in the classroom studied. The teaching and learning of writing was, first and foremost, largely unarticulated. Free of the materials and precise district mandates that both supported and limited instruction in other academic subjects, writing posed both a problem and an opportunity for the teacher and students whom we observed.

It is possible that relative freedom from outside management of curriculum makes writing the last bastion of independent decision-making among school subjects. Potentially it is still an area in which teachers can make fundamental choices about the knowledge to impart, the ways to impart it, the nature of assessment, and the reasons for learning. But it is also possible for such lack of specification of the curriculum to be a source of problems. Teachers may enact writing instruction unreflectively--filling up the time with activities that merely recapitulate their own limited experiences as former students of writing. Worse, such an unregulated part of the course of study can suffer for lack of legitimacy. Thus we sometimes see writing slighted in a busy school day or passing unremarked upon as it is used throughout the day as a means to other academic ends.

The absence of curricular materials in writing has engendered a paradoxical situation with respect to writing instruction. On one hand. research on the teaching of writing portrays teachers engaging in some of their most creative and rich preactive and interactive planning precisely because they lack the curricular and managerial props and constraints that materials would provide (Clark & Elmore, 1981). However, much of that creative instruction is "invisible"--to analysts, to students, and to teachers themselves. The invisibility happens in at least two ways. First, teachers often engage students in writing that is "incidental" to the completion of other academic tasks and miss, in their efforts to complete those tasks, opportunities to draw student attention to the important

aspects of the very writing processes they are using. The second source of the invisibility of writing instruction lies in the nature of classrooms as places in which to study and communicate with others. Writing is ubiquitous in classrooms, although explicit writing instruction may not be. Writing of papers and tests can become such a part of everyday life in classrooms that it goes unremarked upon by its users. Thus the powerful potential of writing in use in everyday school life goes unexploited such that it is neither addressed in teacher preparation nor accounted for in curricular descriptions; it is not even "counted" as writing and writing instruction by educators, children, or parents. Yet it is precisely this everyday use of language that is at the heart of the process of becoming a competent communicator.

This state of affairs makes writing a strategic site for curricular research. In addition, writing is a school subject that potentially calls forth considerable professionalism in teachers. In undertaking writing instruction they may find themselves having to reflect upon their own experience as writers, the lives of their diverse students and the role of writing in them, the opportunities for becoming literate in their classrooms, the problems of standards in writing, and our societal definitions of and values about literacy.

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Appendix

Appendix to Field Notes: "Common Writings" Posters put up in Room 12 for Open House

Second Grade

Autobiography: Significant Life Events

The students will bring in five or six photographs that were taken during their life or that they have taken from a magazine as representative of themselves. They will assemble these and write about their significance in their life.

Sentence & Paragraph:*

The students will write interrogative, declarative, imperative, and exclammatory sentences. Folder

Report and Research Writing:

The students will alphabetize by second letter and gain familiarity with library arrangement.

Imaginative/Fiction Writing:

Imaginary Creature. The students will bring in pictures of monsters and their "unreal" creatures and discuss them. Have the students make up their own creature and write about what it looks like and does.

Copying:

The students will copy a short paragraph from the blackboard.

*Required sample. Also choose a second Common Writing Sample.